

LCQ2: Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

The Education Bureau (EDB) has decided to resume the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) from this year. Each year, the EDB will sample 10 per cent of the Primary 3 students from each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary school to participate in TSA, which is administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). Meanwhile, schools may apply to the HKEAA on their own for participation in TSA by all the Primary 3 students in their schools, and may request for their TSA school reports from the HKEAA under such circumstances. It has been reported that, as at April 30, about 230 primary schools in Hong Kong, including 30 government primary schools, opted for all the Primary 3 students in their schools to participate in TSA this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of schools to date that have applied for participation in TSA by all the Primary 3 students in their schools this year and the total number of students involved, together with a breakdown by school type (i.e. aided, DSS, government and private primary schools);

(2) as the EDB has indicated that it will, upon resumption of TSA, continue to monitor whether there is any recurrence of the situation of schools drilling their students for participating in the assessment, whether the EDB has formulated a specific monitoring mechanism for this purpose and monitor the situation directly through major stakeholders such as teachers and parents; if so, of the details and the implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the type of follow-up measures to be adopted by the authorities for addressing situations such as schools drilling students or disrupting their normal learning in order to cope with TSA, or attracting enrolment by students through boasting about their TSA results?

Reply:

President,

In March 2018, the Education Bureau (EDB) accepted the report and recommendations of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee), including the new arrangements for Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) in 2018 and beyond. Under the new arrangements, the arrangements for the territory-wide and school

levels of Primary 3 TSA will be handled separately.

At the territory-wide level, the Government will sample about 10 per cent of students from each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme school to participate in the annual Primary 3 TSA. In addition, to understand the overall learning performance of non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs so as to provide appropriate support, a certain number of students from these two student groups have to be separately sampled to meet the statistical requirements. Students' assessment results will only be counted as territory-wide data. Since only a small number of students in each school will participate in the assessment and the situation of individual schools cannot be reflected, school reports will not be provided.

Schools which would like to obtain school-level reports to improve learning and teaching may directly approach the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to arrange participation of all of their Primary 3 students. In addition, in the light of school-based and subject-based needs, schools may choose to obtain different assessment information, including four different types of reports, reports on overall performance of students with special educational needs and/or non-Chinese speaking students, and school reports for the questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation. The HKEAA will put reports of their choice into the online system for schools' direct downloading. The EDB will not obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA.

In fact, as part of the review process in the previous two years, some schools indicated their requests on the continuous use of assessment information to improve learning and teaching, while, at the same time, some members of the community showed their distrust of the previous arrangements for TSA. The new arrangements recommended by the Committee manage to balance the views of both sides, and aim to further strengthen the confidence of the education sector and the community in TSA and rebuild mutual trust, ultimately achieving TSA's objective of promoting assessment for learning to benefit the students. The audio-visual assessment for Chinese and the speaking assessment parts for Chinese and English of Primary 3 TSA in 2018 were conducted on May 2 and 3, and the written assessment parts for Chinese, English and Mathematics will be conducted in mid-June. It has progressed smoothly so far. The EDB will continue to closely monitor related operational arrangements.

Our reply to the Hon Ip Kin-yuen's question is as follows:

(1) Under the new arrangements, schools which would like all their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain detailed school reports may approach the HKEAA directly for arrangements. The EDB has publicly pledged not to enquire about the participation of individual schools or obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA. Therefore, the EDB does not have information on the participation of individual schools, including school names, types, number of students and respective school sponsoring bodies. The EDB will also not enquire about relevant information from the HKEAA so as to avoid misunderstanding. According to the information released by the HKEAA to

the public, by end of April 2018, about 230 primary schools opted for full cohort participation in Primary 3 TSA.

(2) and (3) The new arrangements and the enhancement measures have greatly reduced the incentives for drilling, and drilling problem before the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) and 2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study was not observed, while the EDB will closely monitor the situation. In the previous two years, the EDB adopted questionnaire surveys to collect and gauge views of more than 23 000 parents of students participating in Primary 3 TSA, and more than 50 focus group meetings for teachers were conducted to understand how schools take forward and implement the arrangements for Primary 3 TSA, including whether there were additional exercises for TSA. The EDB will continue to collect and gauge views of parents and teachers of students participating in Primary 3 TSA through questionnaire surveys and focus group meetings.

In addition, the EDB will keep in view the implementation of school-based assessment through various channels, including inspections, school visits and daily contact. It is worth noting that Primary 3 TSA is an assessment on Basic Competencies which form part of the curriculum, and are the core requirements of the curriculum that students are expected to acquire upon completion of the learning stage. We should not simply categorise the exercises that schools or teachers give to students for consolidating their Basic Competencies as drilling for the purpose of Primary 3 TSA or simply equate Primary 3 TSA with drilling.

According to the prevailing practice, when downloading school reports from the website of the HKEAA, schools must follow the "Protocol of School Level Data of the TSA" and undertake not to publicise the school level data, or part of the data in isolation, through any channels (such as school's publication, school's website and other publicity materials) to anybody outside school. The HKEAA will seriously follow up with schools for any violations.

In fact, the community's extensive discussion and concern about TSA issues have significantly enhanced the transparency about schools' taking forward and implementation of the new arrangements for Primary 3 TSA. The EDB will closely monitor the implementation of the new arrangements and maintain communication with schools and related stakeholders to explore room for continued enhancement and follow-up arrangements. If related complaints are received, the Bureau will investigate and take follow-up actions.

Thank you, President.